REMARKS

The Office Action of July 31, 2002, has been received and reviewed. Claims 1 through 4, 6 through 22, 24 through 26, and 28 through 40 were previously pending in the above-referenced application and are subject to an election of species requirement. Claims 24, 25, and 36 have been amended.

Claim Amendments

It is respectfully submitted that none of the amendments presented herein introduces new matter into the above-referenced application. Entry of the amendments is, accordingly, respectfully requested, as is examination of the claims, as amended.

Information Disclosure Statement

Please note that Information Disclosure Statements were filed in the above-referenced application on December 14, 2000, and April 26, 2001, but that the undersigned attorney has not yet received initialed copies of the PTO-1449s that accompanied these Information Disclosure Statements. It is respectfully requested that the information cited on the PTO-1449s be made of record in the above-referenced application and that initialed copies of the PTO-1449s evidencing the same be returned to the undersigned attorney.

Election of Species Requirement

The Office has identified the following species of invention (Office Action, page 2, item 2):

Species I – drawn to a method of exposing a conductive structures; and

Species II – drawn to a method of forming a "solder mask".

An election is hereby made, without traverse, to prosecute the invention of Species II.

It is respectfully submitted that claims 33 through 40 clearly read on Species I and that claims 1 through 4, 6 through 22, 24 through 26, and 28 through 32 clearly read on Species II.

It is also submitted that claims 33 and 36, which include slightly different recitations, are generic to Species I, while claim 22 is generic to species II.

Despite the above election made to facilitate and accelerate the review process of the above-referenced application, Applicants respectfully submit that 1 through 4 and 6 through 21 also read on Species I. Each of these claims is drawn to both a method for forming a polymeric structure with which conductive structures are formed (Species I), as well as to a method for exposing at least portions of the peripheries of the formed conductive structures (Species II).

With respect to the position that claims 1 through 4 and 6 through 21 are drawn to a method of forming a solder mask, it should be understood by those of ordinary skilled in the art that the steps in independent claim 1 of disposing a layer comprising polymeric material..., imparting said layer with a thickness..., and forming at least one aperture... can be used to produce, not stated herein as a limitation but as an example only, a solder mask. Furthermore, contrary to the statement made in the Office Action that "unfortunately, the specification does not clearly present patentably distinct subject matter as separate figures or embodiments, so the examiner needs help to understand what applicant means by solder mask" (Office Action, last three lines on page 2), the specification of the present application does clearly state what is meant by a "solder mask," i.e., "as used herein, the term solder mask is expansive and not limiting, including structures for application of materials to substrates to form conductive elements, whether metallic or non-metallic" (Patent Application, paragraph **[0012]**).

CONCLUSION

A prompt Action on the merits of claims 22 through 40 is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: August 28, 2002

Enclosure: VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

24. (Amended) The method of claim [23] 22, wherein said disposing and said forming said layer are effected substantially simultaneously.

25. (Three Times amended) The method of claim [23] 22, wherein said forming said layer comprises planarizing said layer.

36. (Twice Amended) A method of exposing a conductive structure that protrudes from a surface of a semiconductor device through a solder mask that comprises a polymeric material positioned on the surface of the semiconductor device, comprising:

reducing a thickness of at least portions of the solder mask laterally surrounding the conductive structures.